

A Comparison of SAS and SPSS for the PC

by

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1. Introduction

Statistics has always benefited from progress in technology. Users of statistics have always tried to ease the burden of computation required by using machines to help them do the work for them whenever possible. With the recent explosion in the use of micro-computers and the easy availability of powerful statistical packages like SAS, SPSS, BMDP and Minitab on the PC, I feel that the usage of statistics via these packages will greatly increase as more users and researchers in various disciplines begin to discover the power and usefulness of statistics in decision making. Unfortunately, there is the danger that with the wide availability of user friendly statistical packages, many people who would normally consult a statistician or someone knowledgeable in statistics would now bypass the middleman and do the statistical analysis all by themselves resulting in the inappropriate use of statistical tools and techniques.

2. Factors in the Choice of a Statistical Package

Generally, the choice of a statistical package will depend on a number of factors like:

- suitability for the intended purpose (does it have all or most of the statistical techniques you need implemented?).

- ease of use (i.e., how user-friendly the package is, is it menu driven? ease in entering the data and in writing the program),

- reliability (i.e., does the package have bugs, inaccuracies, etc.?)

- availability/support (i.e., is it available locally? How good is the vendor support if you face problems?),

- cost (Is it within our budget? Is it an outright buy or is it leased?),

- hardware requirements (are hard disks essential? What capacity? networking?),